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**EVALUATING STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF VALUE AND
PREFERENCES FOR ONLINE PROGRAMS IN SKILL-BASED
LEARNING: AN APPLIED EXERCISE**

by

Darcy Lynn Stewart

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree**

of

DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

in

**Business Entrepreneurship
in the Department of Management**

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Abstract

In an age where training and knowledge are easily accessible online, textbooks, lecture slides and other class materials have migrated to online programs. Online programs are becoming easier to maintain for professors and administrators and offer some convenience and efficiency that traditional classroom lectures do not. It is widely assumed that students who have grown up with cell phones, email accounts, social media, iPods, Google and laptops easily identify with internet based applications. This research studies a group of over 30 university students seeking to develop skill-sets to prepare them for entering the workforce through participation in an online and traditional classroom experience. This research can be used by professors seeking to develop presentation mediums that will most effectively teach students in skill-based curriculums.

Acknowledgments

Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States, once said, “I am a success today because I had a friend who believed in me and I didn’t have the heart to let him down.” This quote expresses perfectly my sentiments towards any success I’ve attained throughout my life. I owe so many individuals credit and thanks for influencing the completion of this research.

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I. Introduction

As technology continues to expand, new, innovative products continue to emerge, making it easier to travel, to learn and be informed, communicate, and to solve various problems. New technologies increase efficiency and convenience throughout all aspects of life including professional, educational, and social activities and pursuits.

Online programs have been derived to create, strengthen, and maintain social interactions, as well as to expand the sphere of accessible, efficient and effective education around the world.

Many colleges and universities have begun using technology as professors enter grades and post announcements to online programs, require online textbooks, and have more assignments, readings, and materials accessible for students online.

Many classes rely heavily on online learning components and some are offered solely online for an audience of distant students studying independently. With this online based learning, a remote teacher or facilitator can access a wider reach of students through posting video or audio lectures, assignments, while still remaining in touch across distances for questions and feedback via email communication.

Online learning systems, small or large, are efficient in many ways. Because many university students have grown up with technology, it is widely assumed that students find it easy and convenient to navigate and problem solve through online learning programs.

This type of learning, however, decreases social learning and interaction that takes place inside the traditional classroom. How important are social interactions to students learning skill-based, active principles? What are students' perceptions of value toward online programs, and what are their preferences for learning?

This research studies students' perception of value and preference towards learning a specific business skillset and mindset from an online program alone versus participating in an interactive classroom experience with other students and facilitator.

II. Literature Review

Past research studies have explored the use of technology for effective student learning, student perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of online learning, and business skills essential for a competitive economy.

Technology and Learning

With a rising generation of tech-savvy students, professors and entire universities have increased the usage of technology and implemented systems that support more independent learning as it is believed to be both an “efficient” and “effective” mechanism for student education (Zhang, 2004).

A term called “e-learning” has been described as, “technology-based learning in which learning materials are delivered electronically to remote learners via a computer network.” (Zhang, 76).

In 2004, Zhang, Zhou and Nunamaker conducted a study to learn whether e-learning could replace traditional classroom based learning. After testing multiple groups on various concepts, researchers found students received higher test scores after being exposed to online lectures accompanied by interactive activities and visuals than sitting in traditional student classroom learning environments (Zhang, 2004).

Student Praises and Complaints of Online Learning

Previous research has also explored student satisfaction with and common complaints of web-based learning (Zhang, 2004).

Students have identified many strengths of online learning, including convenience and the ability to complete lessons at their own time (Singh, 2003). Students have reported the following factors as increasing their satisfaction with online learning program: the actual course design, comfort with technology and online programs, time management skills, and own motivation (Singh, 2003).

In Zhang’s research (2004), students commonly reported feeling confused by and frustrated with e-learning systems. Students also complained that e-learning programs have a tendency to become disengaging, repetitive, and boring for students (Zhang, 2004). Technical problems and difficulty understanding course goals or objectives are other irritations for students (Singh, 2003).

Petrides’ (2002) and Vonderwell’s (2003) studies of web-based learning both revealed students’ frustration with the lack of immediate response and feedback from instructors and fellow students. Vonderwell (2003) also found students complain about the “lack of a sense of community” and experienced “feelings of isolation,” when participating solely in online learning (Song, 61). This finding was repeated as students reported having no connection or relationship with the instructor in Wood’s (2002) research, as well as no real connections with fellow students Singh’s (2003) research.

Building Skills Necessary for Business

Test scores are not the only indicator of learning, especially when it comes to applied learning or practicing skills, and while many facts, concepts, principles and some technical skills can be learned from readings, papers, assignments, and exams, other skillsets essential for business professionals must be more actively taught and practiced by student learners.

From various research studies cited above, a common problem cited with online or e-learning is the inability to make connections amongst the students or between student and professor. Ironically, relationship building has been identified by current business leaders as a desirable trait of business professionals (ICP, 2010).

Relationship-building is one type of “soft skill” that many professionals currently look for in potential employees. Other “soft skills” include written and oral communication, teamwork, multicultural awareness, ability to negotiate, time management, and characteristics such as integrity, accountability and motivation (Vincent, 2009).

These skills are important to organizations, and thus vital for the prospective job-seeker to acquire. Networking, finding and working with a mentor, and building a community of influential professionals are particularly important skills for a recent college graduate pursuing a new career.

As important as these “soft skills” are to employers and thus to job seekers in the real business world, many top-ranked MBA schools throughout the United States struggle to effectively teach these skills to students (Navarro, 2008).

Student Perceptions of Online Programs and Real Value in Skill-Based Education

Students see and experience the advantages and disadvantages of working with online and technology programs, but what is their perception of *value* toward online program instruction versus classroom instruction?

Common assumptions include students’ high interest in online programs because of their ability to navigate through programs and the ease and convenience of independent study. Can skillsets be learned through independent online study, and does independent study work effectively for skill-based education intended to create real, active change and influence lives?

In this research, an eight week program was developed to teach university students a skillset and mindset to become more competitive and attain great jobs after graduation. The program included a book, access to an online program and community, and physical class meetings with other students and facilitators. Students’ perceptions of value for the online and classroom components were measured to determine effectiveness of each component in fulfilling their mission to teach real business skills.

III. Methods

The Great Work, Great Career Learning Group

This experiment was the first time the Great Work, Great Career Learning Group had been tested. It grew out of an initiative between the Huntsman School of Business at Utah State University and The Stephen R. Covey Group. Prior to this experiment, the online lessons and tools were made available to adult groups for a fee of \$199.99. For the purpose of this experiment, testing the program with university students, a different model or program design was created based on other student programs offered through the Huntsman School of Business at Utah State University.

The program design included three basic components: immersion in the book, access to the online lessons and tools, and participation with other students and facilitators in a classroom setting every Tuesday for nine weeks throughout the summer. The course curriculum guide is attached as Appendix I.

Throughout the course, the online and the classroom component would be observed and evaluated independently of each other by participating students. The “overall experience,” including all three components, would also be observed and evaluated.

The Great Work, Great Career Learning Group had its opening night Tuesday, June 1, 2010.

Learning Group Students

Marketing the Great Work, Great Career Learning Group began the last week of Utah State University's Spring 2010 semester and went through four main mediums: poster advertisements, emails through student databases and clubs/organizations, creating a webpage, and word of mouth. Each of the interns on the team had been involved with various clubs and organizations across campus and had different spheres of influence which provided the ability to market across a large population rather quickly. Within two weeks, 71 applicants had been submitted.

Applications for GWGC were fairly simple and included basic contact information, references, application of interest, and resume upload. Each of the essays and resumes were read and rated by two individuals. From this process, the pool of applicants was cut to about 50 candidates to be interviewed to fill 30 student spots.

Initial interviews were video recorded and served three purposes: 1) narrow the candidates down to about 30 students; 2) gauge students' current understanding of the principles to be taught; and 3) gauge the students' initial interview performance.

Rubrics were created to accomplish the last two interview objectives: to rate initial understanding of content and interviewing skills. Rubrics specifically measured the interviewee's clarity of response, presentation, engagement, competency and overall impression. Each interviewee was rated by at least two interviewers.

Many factors were involved in meeting the first objective, the actual selection of the students. Some factors included signs of real interest, potential of direct application into the interviewee's

life, and availability or opportunity to participate in the future.

During the interview, it was made clear that upon selection, the interviewee would be expected to complete weekly online lessons, read chapters of the book, *Great Work, Great Career*, come to class once a week, provide feedback on the program, and pay a \$20 classroom fee for materials. Each student accepted these terms voluntarily and showed significant interest in learning the material.

A group of 38 students was selected to participate in the learning group. Students were in their junior or senior years and just about to graduate or apply for graduate school. Business students made up half of the class with the remaining representing various disciplines across campus. Interestingly, this mix was representative of the total applicants.

A detailed chart is included in Appendix II which lists the total applicants and summer 2010 class by major.

Structure of the Online Program

The online program was designed to supplement the content from one of Dr. Stephen R. Covey's newest books, *Great Work, Great Career*. The program consists of eight webinars, or video lessons, taught by Dr. Covey and co-author Jennifer Colosimo. The video lessons with Dr. Covey include award-winning video clips used by FranklinCovey, international leadership and business consulting organization, and illustrate real life examples.

The online program also consists of reflection questions and journal entries at the end of each lesson, as well as tools for making goals and implementing the principles from the lesson into daily life. In accessing the online content, students would become a "member" of an online community, able to add "friends" to gauge progress and provide support for setting and attaining goals. Students could also interact in online forums and by commenting on each other's public journal entries.

Evaluation Methods: Weekly Surveys

Several mediums were devised to evaluate the effectiveness of the online versus the course component of the learning group. Students filled out one online and one course evaluation each week. Evaluations were tabulated weekly. Percentages were tracked week to week and direct commentary or feedback was sent to the appropriate individual.

Since the learning group, several wording changes have been made for clarity and to better isolate items for additional research and future evaluations.

Online Evaluation

At the beginning of class each week, students filled out an evaluation for the online lessons, which they completed during the week. This evaluation focused on the video lessons and online tools within the Stephen R. Covey Community and attempts to measure effectiveness of the online program to teach principles, build connections between students, and help students set goals and apply learning.

The online evaluation was distributed weekly to measure the effectiveness of the students' access to the GWGC lessons inside the Stephen R. Covey Online Community and is included in Appendix III.

Course Evaluation

At the end of each Tuesday class, students filled out an evaluation on the class format and presentation or delivery of the facilitators. The purpose of this evaluation is to evaluate the effectiveness of the physical classroom component including class format or structure, most effective facilitation practices, and group interaction in teaching students to make connections and apply the principles while feeling a sense of accountability and group support.

The course evaluation was distributed weekly to measure the effectiveness of the course component and is included in Appendix III.

Pricing Questionnaire

To understand the students' perception of value around the program, a pricing questionnaire was distributed amongst the students at the halfway point and at the conclusion of the program. Students were asked how much they would be willing to pay for online access only versus participating in the whole learning group experience.

The pricing questionnaire is included in Appendix IV.

Structure Questionnaire

As another way to understand students' perception of value for both styles, a structure survey was conducted. Students were asked to identify their preference between accessing the online information independently of the group and participating in a class experience with other students and facilitators. This survey was conducted twice around the midpoint and one more time at the conclusion of the learning group.

Final Evaluations

At the end of the learning group experience, students were asked to complete a final evaluation. The following questions were modeled after the standard seminar evaluations used by FranklinCovey and asked on the final evaluation:

The evaluation was designed to specifically isolate the students' likeliness of recommending the online versus the course or packaged components and can be found in Appendix IV.

IV. Results

Online and Course Evaluations

Because the summer months fluctuate with vacations and various commitments, attendance fluctuated throughout the summer course. The following charts show the percentage of attending students who turned in evaluations, or the percentage population captured by the data.

Online Evaluations	June 8	June 15	June 22	June 29	July 6	July 13	July 20
<i>responses</i>	35	30	26	23	21	16	10
<i>attendance</i>	35	32	27	31	27	18	22
%	100%	94%	96%	74%	78%	89%	45%

avg # of responses: 23

avg attendance: 27.4

avg response rate: 82%

Class Evaluations	June 8	June 15	June 22	June 29	July 6	July 13	July 20
<i>responses</i>	35	28	27	25	20	12	16
<i>attendance</i>	35	32	27	31	27	18	22
%	100%	88%	100%	81%	74%	67%	73%

avg # of responses: 23.3

avg attendance: 27.4

avg response rate: 83%

The average response rate is over 80 percent, representing a majority of the student population. The overall response rate was highest during the first month and lowest the last couple weeks.

For the first few weeks of the class, evaluations were passed out at the beginning and end of class and collected from students a few minutes after distribution. In an effort to determine the best practice for distributing and collecting weekly evaluations, a new method was used the first couple weeks in July. In this method, evaluations were set out for students to pick up on their own, fill out at their leisure, and turn in before leaving class.

This method seemed more convenient for students but clearly turned to be less effective means of collecting responses, as response rates dropped significantly the last couple weeks. One other possible explanation for the decrease in response rates towards the end is decreased commitment which often surfaces toward the end of a class or program.

On June 29 specifically, Jennifer Colosimo, co-author of *Great Work, Great Career* and Chief Operating Officer of FranklinCovey, attended the evening for a special presentation with

the students and stayed for a social afterwards. Surveys were not as effectively collected with this special occasion, which may explain the significant decrease in response rates on this night.

The following chart reports the average online effectiveness over the seven week period:

Prompt		Average %	Average # Responses
1. Was the online learning easy-to-use and easy-to-follow?	YES	95%	22.29
	NO	5%	1.00
2. Were the online lessons with Dr. Covey or Jennifer Colosimo effective in teaching you principles for finding meaningful work?	YES	96%	22.43
	NO	4%	0.86
3. Did the [specific] exercises and tools in the online lesson help you think critically and understand how to apply the principles?	YES	90%	24.60
	NO	10%	2.80

On average, students found the online lessons easy to use and highly effective in teaching principles; the tools and exercises did not seem to be as effective for students.

Students had access to a handful of the same tools each lesson, but each lesson had certain exercises unique to the lesson content. In future research, this can be broken up to isolate lesson specific exercises (ex. "Find Your Voice Tool") from general tools (ex. "Goal Manager Tool").

The following chart reports the average course effectiveness over the seven week period:

Prompt		Average %	Average # Responses
1. Was the content of interest to you?	YES	99%	23.14
	NO	1%	0.14
2. Was this content valuable and applicable for you?	YES	98%	22.57
	NO	2%	0.57
3. Do you feel the lessons from this presentation have helped you become more likely to find a great job or career?	YES	95%	21.71
	NO	5%	1.14
4. Was the content presented in a compelling, valuable way?	YES	91%	20.43
	NO	10%	2.29
5. Do you feel you have learned and understand more about how to prepare yourself for a career than you did before by coming to this class?	YES	93%	21.57
	NO	7%	1.57

On average, students were highly interested in the content of the class meeting discussions and found the information to be applicable to their situation. On average, students found value in the presentations and discussions and saw a direct link from class to aid them in their career search.

The score for compelling and valuable presentations is lower. As facilitators changed weekly and presentations are dependent on the facilitator, a lower average in this category resulted from weekly fluctuations over the period of time. This is a natural result of various presentations styles and experience, which will be addressed in the next section.

Weekly Evaluations

The next several charts provide the data from the weekly online and course evaluations. This includes the raw data or number of responses as well as the percentage, both from an entire average view, and broken down weekly. The first set of charts walks through the online evaluations, followed by the course evaluations, and completed by the online/course comparison.

Online Evaluations

Prompt		June 8, 2010	June 15, 2010	June 22, 2010	June 29, 2010
1. Was the online learning easy-to-use and easy-to-follow?	YES	97%	90%	100%	100%
	NO	3%	10%	0%	0%
2. Were the online lessons with Dr. Covey or Jennifer Colosimo effective in teaching you principles for finding meaningful work?	YES	100%	93%	100%	96%
	NO	0%	7%	0%	4%
3. Did the [specific] exercises and tools in the online lesson help you think critically and understand how to apply the principles?	YES	92%	77%	96%	96%
	NO	8%	23%	4%	4%

Online Evaluations (cont'd)

Prompt		July 6, 2010	July 13, 2010	July 20, 2010
<i>1. Was the online learning easy-to-use and easy-to-follow?</i>	<i>YES</i>	95%	100%	80%
	<i>NO</i>	5%	0%	20%
<i>2. Were the online lessons with Dr. Covey or Jennifer Colosimo effective in teaching you principles for finding meaningful work?</i>	<i>YES</i>	95%	88%	100%
	<i>NO</i>	5%	13%	0%
<i>3. Did the [] exercises and tools in the online lesson help you think critically and understand how to apply the principles?</i>	<i>YES</i>	90%	-	-
	<i>NO</i>	10%	-	-

Online Evaluations: Raw Data

Prompt		June 8, 2010	June 15, 2010	June 22, 2010	June 29, 2010
<i>1. Was the online learning easy-to-use and easy-to-follow?</i>	YES	36	27	26	23
	NO	1	3	0	0
	<i>total</i>	37	30	26	23
<i>2. Were the online lessons with Dr. Covey or Jennifer Colosimo effective in teaching you principles for finding meaningful work?</i>	YES	37	28	26	22
	NO	0	2	0	1
	<i>total</i>	37	30	26	23
<i>3. Did the [specific] exercises and tools in the online lesson help you think critically and understand how to apply the principles?</i>	YES	34	23	25	22
	NO	3	7	1	1
	<i>total</i>	37	30	26	23

Online Evaluations: Raw Data (cont'd)

Prompt		July 6, 2010	July 13, 2010	July 20, 2010
1. Was the online learning easy-to-use and easy-to-follow?	YES	20	16	8
	NO	1	0	2
	total	21	16	10
2. Were the online lessons with Dr. Covey or Jennifer Colosimo effective in teaching you principles for finding meaningful work?	YES	20	14	10
	NO	1	2	0
	total	21	16	10
3. Did the [specific] exercises and tools in the online lesson help you think critically and understand how to apply the principles?	YES	19	-	-
	NO	2	-	-
	total	21	-	-

Course Evaluations

Prompt		June 8, 2010	June 15, 2010	June 22, 2010	June 29, 2010
1. Was the content of interest to you?	YES	100%	96%	100%	100%
	NO	0%	4%	0%	0%
2. Was this content valuable and applicable for you?	YES	97%	96%	100%	100%
	NO	3%	4%	0%	0%
3. Do you feel the lessons from this presentation have helped you become more likely to find a great job or career?	YES	88%	92%	100%	100%
	NO	12%	8%	0%	0%
4. Was the content presented in a compelling, valuable way?	YES	94%	65%	93%	100%
	NO	6%	35%	7%	0%
5. Do you feel you have learned and understand more about how to prepare yourself for a career than you did before by coming to this class?	YES	91%	85%	96%	100%
	NO	9%	15%	4%	0%

Course Evaluations (cont'd)

Prompt		July 6, 2010	July 13, 2010	July 20, 2010
1. Was the content of interest to you?	YES	100%	100%	100%
	NO	0%	0%	0%
2. Was this content valuable and applicable for you?	YES	90%	100%	100%
	NO	10%	0%	0%
3. Do you feel the lessons from this presentation have helped you become more likely to find a great job or career?	YES	95%	92%	100%
	NO	5%	8%	0%
4. Was the content presented in a compelling, valuable way?	YES	95%	92%	94%
	NO	5%	8%	6%
5. Do you feel you have learned and understand more about how to prepare yourself for a career than you did before by coming to this class?	YES	90%	92%	100%
	NO	10%	8%	0%

Course Evaluations: Raw Data

Prompt		June 8, 2010	June 15, 2010	June 22, 2010	June 29, 2010
1. Was the content of interest to you?	YES	35	27	27	25
	NO	0	1	0	0
	total	35	28	27	25
2. Was this content valuable and applicable for you?	YES	34	26	27	25
	NO	1	1	0	0
	total	35	27	27	25
3. Do you feel the lessons from this presentation have helped you become more likely to find a great job or career?	YES	30	24	27	25
	NO	4	2	0	0
	total	34	26	27	25
4. Was the content presented in a compelling, valuable way?	YES	31	17	25	25
	NO	2	9	2	0
	total	33	26	27	25
5. Do you feel you have learned and understand more about how to prepare yourself for a career than you did before by coming to this class?	YES	32	23	26	25
	NO	3	4	1	0
	total	35	27	27	25

Course Evaluations: Raw Data (cont'd)

Prompt	July 6, 2010	July 13, 2010	July 20, 2010
1. Was the content of interest to you?	20	12	16
	0	0	0
	20	12	16
2. Was this content valuable and applicable for you?	18	12	16
	2	0	0
	20	12	16
3. Do you feel the lessons from this presentation have helped you become more likely to find a great job or career?	19	11	16
	1	1	0
	20	12	16
4. Was the content presented in a compelling, valuable way?	19	11	15
	1	1	1
	20	12	16
5. Do you feel you have learned and understand more about how to prepare yourself for a career than you did before by coming to this class?	18	11	16
	2	1	0
	20	12	16

Comparing Week-to-Week Evaluations

Online: The online learning was easier to use and follow as the weeks progressed and students became more familiar with the site, with the exception of the very last lesson. From June 8-July 6, students accessed lessons featuring Dr. Covey. On July 13th and 20th, the lessons students accessed lessons with Jennifer Colosimo. These last lessons also had a different format or structure than the first five. This may explain some of the significant differences in the ratings for easy-to-use and effectiveness on these days.

The tools consistently received lowest ratings of effectiveness. The tools may not be accomplishing their purpose in helping students better understand or apply principles of the online learning. This may be due to technological problems of a beta product, as many students expressed frustrations with various tools not fully functioning. Criticisms of the tools included frustration with only saving the work online but not being able to print documentation to see it on a regular basis. (Note: There were no unique, specific tools on July 13th and 20th so this question was omitted.)

The number of evaluations decreased with each week. As mentioned above, a new method of distributing and collecting surveys may have been less effective and accounted for part of this. Lower attendance, decreasing commitment, and not completing online lessons in time for class could also affect the lower response.

Course: The course was generally highly interesting, applicable, and perceived as valuable to the students. The actual presentation delivery varied the most week to week. A different facilitator presented each week, bringing his or her own life experiences and presentation styles into the classroom. These differences can explain these variations in effective delivery. Student perception of the course as a value-added component also fluctuated week-to-week. Student interaction sets the course apart from independent online learning or book reading. The more interaction and less “rehashing” or basic content review made for more value-added.

Again, the lower responses could be due to lower attendance, decreasing commitment, and ineffective distribution and collection practices.

Assessing a Correlation between Evaluations

Before examining results of course and online effectiveness, are there correlations that run throughout evaluations? The correlation tables found in Appendix IV list complete correlations between all evaluations questions and attendance. Some significant findings are listed in this section.

There is a strong correlation between all online questions (see Appendix IV). If a student found the program easy to use and easy to follow, he/she likely found the lessons and tools/exercises to be effective ($p=.9888$, $p=.9769$). The student who thought the lessons

were effective was likely to find the exercises and tools helpful to apply principles ($p=.9854$). There is a strong correlation between the effectiveness of the online lessons and attendance ($p=.8777$).

All course questions are highly correlated (see Appendix IV) and there are several interesting relationships. There is a very high correlation between student perceptions toward the lessons' effectiveness in helping to attain a great career and perception of the course as a unique, value-added component ($p=.9893$). There is a slightly weaker correlation between student perceptions toward the lessons' effectiveness in helping to attain a great career and a compelling presentation delivery ($p=.9220$). Interestingly, the weakest correlation amidst course questions is between interest in the course content and the actual presentation ($p=.8950$). Attendance is highly correlated with all course questions, but interestingly, the weakest correlation is between attendance and compelling presentations ($p=.8077$).

The complete correlation assessment is included in Appendix V.

Pricing Questionnaire

On July 6, 2010, twenty three responses were collected from the initial pricing survey.

As a student, how much would you be willing to pay for access to the Great Work, Great Career lessons on the Stephen R. Covey Online Community? _____

Raw
Responses

25
25
25
25
35
45
50
50
50
50
50
75 + book
100
100

Price Max	Frequency	% of Total
\$50.00	5	35.71%
\$25	4	28.57%
\$100.00	2	14.29%
\$75.00	1	7.14%
\$45.00	1	7.14%
\$35.00	1	7.14%

Average	\$50.36
Mode	\$50.00

Online Only

<i>Prompt</i>	<i>"Yes"</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Would you be willing to pay \$25-50?	22	95.65%
Would you be willing to pay \$50-75?	15	65.22%
Would you be willing to pay \$75-100?	4	17.39%
Would you be willing to pay \$100-150?	1	4.35%
Would you be willing to pay \$150-200?	0	0.00%

(Pricing Cont'd)

As a student, how much would you be willing to pay to participate in the Great Work, Great Career Learning Group, including access to the online lessons and the group classroom experience?

Raw Responses	Price Max	Frequency	% of Total
0	\$100.00	5	35.71%
25	\$50	3	21.43%
25-30	\$0.00	1	7.14%
40	\$25.00	1	7.14%
50	\$25-30	1	7.14%
50	\$40.00	1	7.14%
50	\$75.00	1	7.14%
75	\$150-200	1	7.14%
100			
100			
100			
100			
100			
150-200			

Average	\$72.86
Mode	\$100.00

Learning Group Package

<i>Prompt</i>	<i>"Yes"</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Would you be willing to pay \$25-50?	23	100.00%
Would you be willing to pay \$50-75?	17	73.91%
Would you be willing to pay \$75-100?	14	60.87%
Would you be willing to pay \$100-150?	4	17.39%
Would you be willing to pay \$150-200?	1	4.35%

Analyzing Preliminary Pricing Data Student Written-In Responses:

	Online Access	Access + Group	**Difference
*Price Max Mode	\$50.00	\$100.00	\$50.00
Average	\$50.36	\$72.86	\$22.50

*"Price Max" is the mode, the majority written in by students.

**difference favors Access + Group

The Access + Group received higher price value, as written-in by students themselves. The maximum price the majority of students was willing to pay and the average price from all student responses was higher for the Access + Group option.

The aggregate responses showed students are willing to pay higher price for the Access + Group and from individual responses, students consistently wrote in higher prices for the Access + Group.

Price Range Responses:

<i>Prompt</i>	<i>"Yes"</i>		<i>% of Total</i>	
	Access	+ Group	Access	+ Group
Would you be willing to pay \$25-50?	22	23	95.65%	100.00%
Would you be willing to pay \$50-75?	15	17	65.22%	73.91%
Would you be willing to pay \$75-100?	4	14	17.39%	60.87%
Would you be willing to pay \$100-150?	1	4	4.35%	17.39%
Would you be willing to pay \$150-200?	0	1	0.00%	4.35%

From the question above, results show students were "willing to pay" a higher price for the Access + Group, on the aggregate. Individual students consistently circled one price range higher for the Access + Group than Access alone. This may reflect a higher perception of value for the Access + Group.

Based on the results from both sections of the preliminary price survey, students showed willingness to pay more for the group component when responding independently and when prompted by price ranges.

Second (Final) Pricing Questionnaire

As part of the final evaluation, students took one more pricing survey. Students were asked the same questions, including both the open-ended response and the range question. On August 16, 2010, the following responses were collected:

As a student, how much would you be willing to pay for access (only) to the Great Work, Great Career lessons on the Stephen R. Covey Online Community?

Raw Responses
0
10
10
20
20
20
20
20
25
25
25
30
35
40
40
40
50
50
50
75
100
100

Price Max	Frequency	% of Total
\$20	4	19.05%
\$40	3	14.29%
\$25	3	14.29%
\$100	2	9.52%
\$50	2	9.52%
\$10	2	9.52%
\$75	1	4.76%
\$35	1	4.76%
\$30	1	4.76%
\$5	1	4.76%
\$0	1	4.76%

Average	\$35.29
Mode	\$20.00

Online Only

<i>Prompt</i>	<i>"Yes"</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Would you be willing to pay \$25-50?	20	83.33%
Would you be willing to pay \$51-75?	9	37.5%
Would you be willing to pay \$76-100?	3	12.5%
Would you be willing to pay \$101-150?	0	0.00%
Would you be willing to pay \$151-200?	0	0.00%

As a student, how much would you be willing to pay to participate in the Great Work, Great Career Learning Group, including access to the online lessons and the group classroom experience with other students and facilitators?

Raw Responses
20
20
25
35
40
40
50
50
50
50
50
50
50
50
60
75
75
80
100
150
150
150

Price Max	Frequency	% of Total
\$50	7	33.33%
\$150	3	14.29%
\$75	2	9.52%
\$40	2	9.52%
\$20	2	9.52%
\$100	1	4.76%
80	1	4.76%
60	1	4.76%
35	1	4.76%
25	1	4.76%

Average	\$65.24
Mode	\$50.00

Learning Group Package

<i>Prompt</i>	<i>"Yes"</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Would you be willing to pay \$25-50?	23	95.83%
Would you be willing to pay \$51-75?	15	62.5%
Would you be willing to pay \$76-100?	7	29.17%
Would you be willing to pay \$101-150?	3	12.5%
Would you be willing to pay \$151-200?	0	0.00%

Analyzing Final Pricing Data

Student Written-In Responses

	Online Access	Access + Group	Difference
Price Max Mode	\$20.00	\$50.00	\$30.00
Average	\$35.29	\$65.24	\$29.95

The mode and average prices have dropped for both the online access and the access+group options. Still, students expressed a willingness to pay a higher price for the online access plus group option versus the online access only. Students consistently perceive more value in the inclusion of the group component.

Price Range Responses:

<i>Prompt</i>	<i>"Yes"</i>		<i>% of Total</i>	
	Access	+ Group	Access	+ Group
Would you be willing to pay \$25-50?	20	23	89.33%	95.83%
Would you be willing to pay \$51-75?	9	15	37.5%	62.5%
Would you be willing to pay \$76-100?	3	7	12.5%	29.17%
Would you be willing to pay \$101-150?	0	3	0.00%	12.5%
Would you be willing to pay \$151-200?	0	0	0.00%	0.00%

Interestingly, value as represented by price has dropped in each question. The initial pricing survey was conducted the week following Jennifer Colosimo's visit, a highly valued experience for the students. This reflects the students' high perception of value for Jennifer's visit and may have heightened expectations for the remainder of the program, but no facilitator had as much experience presenting and relating to career-seeking students.

Another factor that may explain the difference is the difference in the timing and collection of the two surveys. The initial pricing survey was given and collected in class. Students come to the class more likely because they see high value in it, and because the survey was handed out and collected right away, students were accountable to complete it and hand it back in. The second pricing survey took place after the completion of the group, with lowered commitment from students and when many are most critical. Students accessed this second pricing survey through an online survey program and were reminded but not directly accountable.

Although the max price ranges have dropped since the initial pricing survey, given the price ranges, a majority of students were willing to pay about one range higher for the online access plus group component versus the online only, signifying higher perception of value.

Preliminary Structure Survey

To understand the student's perspective (as the customer), the first structure survey was distributed on July 6, 2010. Students were asked to mark the statement that best described their preference. A few students wrote "other," requesting either both options be offered, or some combination of the two models be offered. Aligning these responses with the appropriate option, the following results ensued:

I would rather complete the online lessons independently of the classroom group (n=6, 26.09%).

I would prefer participating in the Learning Group with other students and facilitators to learning the principles and content online independently (n=19, 82.61%).

Second Structure Survey

To account for wording confusion on the preliminary survey and to investigate the possibility of another option, a more informal class offering, an additional survey was sent via email on July 20, 2010. The email was sent to the students as a request directly from Janita Andersen, Great Work, Great Career Project Manager from FranklinCovey. The following results were generated from 24 student responses:

Number of Responses	Percentage	Description
0	0%	Online Only (Independent)
3	13%	Brown Bag Informal Meetings
20	83%	Current Model
1	4%	Other

Final Structure Survey

At the conclusion of the learning group experience, students completed one more structure survey. The decision-forcing question required students to choose one refined statement and on August 17, 2010, the following results were collected from 25 student responses:

I would prefer to complete the online lessons only, with no other student/facilitator interaction (n=3, 13%).

I would prefer to complete the online lessons and meet with other students/facilitators in an optional weekly, informal meeting (n=5, 21%).

I would prefer to complete the online lessons and meet with other students/facilitators in a weekly formal class meeting (n=17, 68%).

As the options inside the prompt became more direct and refined, students' preferences became clearer. Still, the students preferring independent access to online programs only remained a small minority. The majority consistently preferred a class package.

Final Evaluation

After the culminating event of the Great Work, Great Career Learning Group, students were asked to take one final survey. About 75% of the students voluntarily participated in the final survey, and the following results were collected from 23 student responses:

How likely is it that you would recommend the online program to others?

Rating	Response	Percentage
0 (low)	1	4%
1	1	4%
2	0	0%
3	0	0%
4	1	4%
5	3	12%
6	2	8%
7	6	24%
8	8	32%
9	1	4%
10 (high)	2	8%

How likely is it that you would recommend the class experience to a friend or colleague?

Rating	Response	Percentage
0 (low)	0	0%
1	0	0%
2	2	8%
3	1	4%
4	0	0%
5	0	0%
6	2	8%
7	6	24%
8	5	20%
9	5	20%
10 (high)	4	16%

This final evaluation was accessed online, omitting the bias from in-class responses from “class-favoring” students.

The course referrals received more total recommendations above 5. The majority of ratings are between 7-9, one whole rank higher than online referrals.

Following this question, students were asked to explain their choice. There were many favorable comments, but the complaints and recommendations revealed real insight on the advantages and disadvantages of each component.

Some complaints and comments regarding the online program specifically included confusion in navigating and using tools, the repetitive nature of the program, and overall functionality as a beta product.

The course component was by no means perfect and several comments recommended specific changes for the format or structure of the course. Main complaints for the course component, however, revolved around *not enough* interaction between the students with hands-on, active goals and practicing techniques.

Students consistently desired higher engagement and accountability or follow up on goals made during the week. Students expressed a desire to gather and work together more. This complaint against the course reveals a lot about student preferences, specifically their desire for some social interactions and social learning.

V. Conclusion & Recommendations

Important findings from this research include the following:

- Students consistently reported inability to connect with each other on the online community. Students also reported frustrations with technological difficulties.
- Students consistently reported wanting more engagement and interaction with both professional, experienced facilitators and students in their same positions within the class curriculum or structure.
- Students consistently reported willingness to pay a higher fee for the classroom and online package versus solely the online access.
- A large majority of students consistently preferred participating in a classroom experience with other students and facilitators versus accessing the online content independently.
- Students were more willing to recommend the whole classroom experience to a friend versus the online program.

In this experiment, students perceived higher value in the opportunity to meet, learn, and problem solve with others versus solely learning independently online. Students also preferred the class format even though it was more inconvenient to attend night classes once a week throughout two months of summer than to complete the online lessons at their leisure.

With impressive technology, tools, visuals, and hands-on activities, what is missing from the online content that drives students' preferences and value perceptions to favor classroom interaction?

The classroom component provided a sense of community. As the group of students met together each week, interaction increased amongst themselves and between them and class facilitators. Students became comfortable asking questions and trouble-shooting amidst small groups because the class became a "safe environment" to challenge and critique each other's progress and share examples and applications of the course principles and skills.

The interaction brought the learning to life in a way the online program could not do alone. While one advantage of an online program is the ability to connect with a large variety of individuals, the skillset/mindset content of this course was best learned within a small, tight-knit group that fostered trust and real accountability.

The answers to this question, however, are best expressed by the students themselves. Appendix VI lists some common and insightful statements from students shared anonymously throughout various surveys.

While students commonly complemented parts of the online program, it was perceived as more of a supplement tool to the main content within the book and the interactions within the “community” of the group. For learning active skills, online programs may not be as effective standing alone, but may be valuable as supplemental learning.

VI. References

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Appendix I

Curriculum

The structure and design of this curriculum is such that students are expected to read the assigned portion of *Great Work, Great Career* and complete the “Learn,” “Think,” and “Do,” sections on the online community *before* each Tuesday evening meeting. Students are expected to come prepared to discuss, engage, and apply every Tuesday.

Curriculum can be broken up into three sections.

1. Group Discussion
 - a. Use key questions from the “Think” section of the online community to generate opening discussion. Students will have completed this section, considered the questions, and be ready for discussion.
 - b. Ask active questions, avoid regurgitation.
 - c. Use key questions from the assigned reading of *Great Work, Great Career* for this opening group discussion. Great questions are posed at the end of each section.
 - d. The facilitator *facilitates* discussion with leading questions. He/she guides and directs the conversation, but does not dominate—this is an opportunity for student discussion and engagement. For best discussion, questions focus on broad, widely-based concepts.
2. Action Groups
 - a. Split up into smaller groups to work on/discuss the “Do’s”.
 - b. This is an opportunity for students to get to know each other and provide support for each other. Conversations inside action groups will likely include, “I had trouble with this part of my goal,” “Is this part of my goal statement clear?” and “Does this goal align with the principles we’ve been taught?” These groups will provide an environment of support and *accountability*. Interns can be “experts” in these areas to interact inside and monitor group effectiveness.
 - c. Groups can be broken up according to the “Do” they want to discuss. Choose a maximum number for groups (a possible range is 3-5 students).
3. Review of Key Principles
 - a. This will be an overview, a review, a chance for the facilitator to emphasize the most important principles from the section to ingrain and solidify them within the students.
 - b. The Covey Group can choose the principles from the content that are most important, which best represent the mission or purpose of *Great Work, Great Career*. The facilitator can choose how to design teaching methods around the principles. This section will be more heavily dominated by the facilitator and will serve as a wrap-up.

Following each Tuesday night, students will be expected to complete the “Share” portion of the lesson inside the online community. This exercise encourages reflection, as students synthesize their learning. Each student should be “friends” with each other in the community and encouraged to post on each other’s forum posts (“Share”) and encourage each other in their goals.

Appendix II

The summer 2010 class for the Great Work, Great Career Learning Group was representative of the total applicants and reflected students from many areas of the university.

The following chart lists the total applicants and summer 2010 class by major.

Total Applicants		Summer 2010 Class	
Business Majors	59%	Business Majors	51%
Political Science	4%	Political Science	5%
Journalism	4%	Journalism	5%
Speech Communications	4%	Speech Communications	5%
Biology/Biochemistry	3%	Biology/Biochemistry	3%
Engineering	4%	Engineering	3%
Education	3%	Education	3%
Sociology	3%	Sociology	5%
Psychology	3%	Psychology	5%
International Studies	1%	International Studies	3%
History	3%	History	5%
Public Relations	3%	Public Relations	3%
Speech Language Pathology	3%	Speech Language Pathology	0%
General Studies	1%	General Studies	0%

Appendix III

Weekly Online Evaluation

June 8, 2010: Get the Work You WantWas the online learning **easy-to-use** and **easy-to-follow**? Yes NoWere the online **lessons** with Dr. Covey or Jennifer Colosimo **effective** in teaching you **principles for finding meaningful work**? Yes NoDid the [specific] **tools and exercises** in the online lesson help you think critically and understand how to **apply** the principles? Yes NoComments: _____

Weekly Course Evaluation

June 8, 2010: Get the Work You WantWas this content of **interest** to you? Yes NoWas this content **valuable** and **applicable** for you? Yes NoDo you feel the lessons from this presentation have helped you become more likely to find a **great job** or career? Yes NoWas the content **presented** in a **compelling, valuable** way? Yes No

Do you feel you have learned and understand more about how to prepare yourself for a career than you did before by coming to this class? Yes No

Comments: _____

Appendix IV

Initial Pricing Survey

As a student, how much would you be willing to pay for access to the Great Work, Great Career lessons on the Stephen R. Covey Online Community? (write in \$ amount)

Would you be willing to pay \$25-50?	Yes	No
Would you be willing to pay \$50-75?	Yes	No
Would you be willing to pay \$75-100?	Yes	No
Would you be willing to pay \$100-150?	Yes	No
Would you be willing to pay \$150-200?	Yes	No

As a student, how much would you be willing to pay to participate in the Great Work, Great Career Learning Group including access to the online lessons and the group classroom experience? (write in \$ amount)

Would you be willing to pay \$25-50?	Yes	No
Would you be willing to pay \$50-75?	Yes	No
Would you be willing to pay \$75-100?	Yes	No
Would you be willing to pay \$100-150?	Yes	No
Would you be willing to pay \$150-200?	Yes	No

Final Evaluation Questions

1. How likely is it that you would recommend the class experience to a friend or colleague? (rate 0-10)
2. What is/are the primary reason/s for the score you just gave us?
3. How likely is it that you would recommend the online program to others? (rate 0-10)
4. What is/are the primary reason/s for the score you just gave us?

Appendix V

Correlation: Online Questions

	<i>QOnline1</i>	<i>QOnline2</i>	<i>QOnline3</i>
QOnline1	1		
QOnline2	0.988813	1	
QOnline3	0.976881	0.958444	1

Correlation: Course Questions

	<i>QClass1</i>	<i>QClass2</i>	<i>QClass3</i>	<i>QClass4</i>	<i>QClass5</i>
QClass1	1				
QClass2	0.994944	1			
QClass3	0.975782	0.98008	1		
QClass4	0.894965	0.90079	0.921992	1	
QClass5	0.983386	0.99008	0.989288	0.947311	1

Online and Course Questions and Attendance

	<i>QOnline1</i>	<i>QOnline2</i>	<i>QOnline3</i>	<i>QClass1</i>	<i>QClass2</i>	<i>QClass3</i>	<i>QClass4</i>	<i>QClass5</i>	<i>Attend Class</i>
QOnline1	1								
QOnline2	0.988813	1							
QOnline3	0.541	0.574449	1						
QClass1	0.911527	0.950324	0.555443	1					
QClass2	0.897039	0.933698	0.58368	0.994944	1				
QClass3	0.847538	0.882896	0.446522	0.975782	0.980082	1			
QClass4	0.786175	0.802895	0.535052	0.894965	0.900791	0.921992	1		
QClass5	0.85997	0.895644	0.553731	0.983386	0.990077	0.989288	0.947311	1	
Attend Class	0.838296	0.877744	0.345067	0.938908	0.917332	0.911483	0.807715	0.909616	1

Appendix VI

Students' Perspectives

With impressive technology, tools, visuals, and hands-on activities, what is missing from the online content that drives students' preferences and value perceptions to favor classroom interaction?

Through a couple of the surveys, students had the opportunity to explain their perspective. Insightful comments from the Great Work, Great Career students from these surveys include:

"I prefer having some form of group or class to discuss the concepts in. I don't feel that the online forum alone is sufficient to help us develop new ways of thinking. The online portion just appears as another online class with assignments, but in-class group discussions allow us to open up and explore different thought processes." D.K.

"Our current experience allows us to learn on our own, and deepen/further cement our learning as we discuss together what we have learned. I enjoy learning from others in that setting." N.L.

"It is so helpful to me to discuss the concepts and get live feedback from people." N.B.

"With the combined experience from the online lessons and from a class led discussion, I believe anyone can get more from the program. It helps me gain a better understanding talking about these things in class after seeing them online. I have noticed in class I find more important points that I missed during the online presentation." D.I.

"I make a better effort to keep up on the lessons if I know that I will have a group discussion in which I want to participate. I also like to have the support of others who are in the same boat that I am in." C.B.

"The internet portion of the course is the meat of everything, but I believe the discussion-led group adds a very valuable dimension to the course and gives the most broad-based experience possible." C.L.

"Having the class created deadlines and a sense of community about the goals that we were trying to accomplish." I.B.

"I think that it would be helpful to spend more time getting to know one another and helping each other talk through our problems."

"I liked the meetings more than the online work [because it] helps you to see that other people are in your same shoes."

“The lessons are great, but they are not learned if you don't discuss or practice the principles therein afterwards. The formal class provides the opportunity to learn and practice the key principles.”

“I would prefer to meet in a setting that holds me accountable for the work I do online or outside of the classroom. [These concepts and skills] are too important to be left at the backburner, they need to be followed up on, so the student feels an obligation to himself, to his fellow students and facilitators, and an obligation to contribute to the greater good.”

“I felt like I learned a lot from the other students and the insight they gained from the reading and online lessons. I think both are invaluable and to get the most out of the program I would recommend participating in both the online lessons as well as the weekly meetings.”

“Most of my learning came when I could ask specific questions to certain individuals.”

“I think more time for the students to interact with each other would be a good idea, and practicing interview skills and helping each other would have beneficial.”

“I really loved having an open group discussion in the class. There were so many new insights I gained from everyone in the class.”

“While I did benefit from the online part of the course, it was much less useful to me personally than the group instruction/exercises.”

“The online videos and stories were touching, but I didn't feel like the rest of [the online program] was all that useful.”

Author's Biography

Darcy Stewart was born and raised in Boise, Idaho. She attended Centennial High School and was actively involved in dance, color guard, Honors, Key Club, and National Honor Society until she graduated with honors in May 2006.

Darcy came to Utah State University on a Presidential Scholarship and studied history and politics before entering the Jon M. Huntsman School of Business as a Business Entrepreneurship major.

In the summer of 2009, Darcy participated in a study abroad semester in South America working on business and humanitarian projects. While there, she analyzed business plans of budding entrepreneurs applying for small business loans in Peru. She conducted field research to determine market trends and demands for a service business. During the next fall semester, Darcy traveled and studied international business and politics throughout Europe.

During her time within the business school, she also participated in Koch Scholars, Huntsman Scholars, and Undergraduate Research, as well as the USU Honors Program.

She was named the 2010 Jon M. Huntsman Undergraduate Researcher of the Year. Her empirical study entitled, "The Influence of Cultural Characteristics on Entrepreneurial Activity around the World," was accepted for presentation and proceedings by four state and regional conferences.

Upon her graduation from Utah State University, Darcy completed an internship with executives at the Office of Stephen R. Covey. She plans to return to graduate school after gaining some years of experience working in the industry.